

Bow Ridge Tunnel
Pennsylvania Railroad
Through Bow Ridge,
.3 mile S of Conemaugh Dam
New Alexandria Vicinity
Westmoreland County
Pennsylvania

HAER No. PA-269

HAER

PA

65-NEWRL.V,

1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

BOW RIDGE TUNNEL

HAER
PA,
65-NEWALY,
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HAER No. PA-269

Location: Through Bow Ridge, .3 mile South of Conemaugh Dam, New Alexandria Vicinity, Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania

USGS Quad: Blairsville (1:24000)
UTM: 17/638600/4480150

Date of Construction: 1906-07

Builder: Pennsylvania Railroad
A.C. Shand, chief engineer
McMenamin & Sons, contractors

Present Owner: U.S. Army Corp of Engineers

Present Use: abandoned

Significance: Part of the extensive Pennsylvania Railroad system, the Bow Ridge Tunnel was constructed when the railroad realigned its rail tracks in this vicinity.

Project Information: In February 1987, the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) and the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) began a multi-year historical and architectural documentation project in southwestern Pennsylvania. Carried out in conjunction with America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP), HAER undertook a comprehensive inventory of Blair, Cambria, Fayette, and Indiana counties as the first step in identifying the region's surviving historic engineering works and industrial resources.

The results of this project have been published in Indiana County, Pennsylvania: An Inventory of Historic Engineering and Industrial Sites (1993), edited by Ken Rose and produced by HABS/HAER for the National Park Service.

Compiler: Richard Quinn, Historian

History:

DESCRIPTION: The second of two tunnels cutting through Bow Bend of the Conemaugh River, the Bow Ridge Tunnel measures approximately 630' in length, cut through the predominantly shale ridge. The west portal is 30' in height, 42' in width, and has a single span semicircular arch opening. A datestone above the arch notes that the tunnel was constructed in 1907. Another stone above reveals that A.C. Shand was the chief engineer, and McMenamin & Sons were the contractors. Tracks were removed about 1950 when a new high level bridge was constructed downstream from the site. The east portal is similar in design. Vandals have shot away the date from the keystone on this side, and there is no stone denoting the engineer or contractor. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has placed a massive concrete plug in the tunnel to keep out the waters of Conemaugh River lake at high levels, and both portals are fenced.

HISTORY: About 1906 the Pennsylvania Rail Road realigned its rail tracks in this vicinity. A new tunnel was constructed a short distance south of the old rail tunnel built in 1853 by the Northwestern Railroad, connected by impressive stone viaducts across the Conemaugh River on either side. The tunnel continued in use until about 1952, when tracks were again relocated to avoid the impoundment of the Conemaugh River Lake. A.C. Shand acted as chief engineer on the project with McMenamin & Sons, contractors.

Sources:

Datestone on arch.

Interview with William Dzombak, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Conemaugh River Lake, 20 July 1990.